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# Caffeine kick



**JOANNE RICHARD**

Life

Consider a Starbucks stop on the way to the gym.

According to a new study, caffeine can jack up your workout so you go longer and harder.

While you're at it, forget the

sugar and cream. The latest energy-boosting coffee craze is to add butter to your morning brew. Bulletproof Coffee, created by Dave Asprey, of [bulletproofexec.com](http://bulletproofexec.com), promises to add more power to that already powerful blend and kick your day and workout into overdrive by increasing energy and alertness, and possibly even shrinking waistlines.

While adding grass-fed but-

ter to your joe makes it a creamy concoction, some health experts would likely with its proposed health benefits.

Maybe butter-infused coffee is not for you. Well, along with a jolt of java, check out ways to boost your energy before hitting the gym:

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■ **Caffeine** is one of the most common ways people use to boost their energy, and according to the British Coffee Association, about two cups an hour prior to working out improves endurance will help you perform for 30% longer. Caffeine will increase your heart-rate and mental alertness, says personal trainer Josh Hewett, of [top-form-fitness.com](http://top-form-fitness.com). "Consuming 100 to 300mg of caffeine before your workout is safe and effective for most people — a cup of coffee is about 100mg. Just practice moderation and if you drink coffee try to avoid adding excessive amounts of cream and sugar."

■ **Carbohydrates** are the body's go-to-fuel source for intense exercise, says Hewett. Consuming high-carb foods or drinks, such as fruit or a sports drink, about an hour before exercise can provides a readily available source of energy for your workout. "Research has also shown that sipping on a sports drink, such as Gatorade or Powerade, during physical activity can delay fatigue and improve performance," says the strength and conditioning coach. Moderation is the key — eating or drinking too much before exercise can cause problems.

■ **Go for fast energy fats.** Think coconut oil. "A type of fat called Medium Chain Triglycerides (MCTs) can be metabolized about as quickly as carbohydrates and also provides a fast fuel source for exercise," says Hewett. "Try eating a spoonful of coconut oil before your next workout and see if it gives you some extra energy. It doesn't taste that bad, and coconut oil also has other health benefits."

■ **Stimulant-free natural energy supplements** can help boost your energy as well. "There is some research to indicate that supplements such as Ginseng, Rhodiola, Dendrobium, L-Carnitine, and certain vitamins and minerals have energy-boosting or fatigue-fighting properties," says the fitness expert. Do your research into these supplements on reputable sites such as [examine.com](http://examine.com) or [PubMed.com](http://pubmed.com).

■ **Get wet when you sweat.** A study in the journal *Clinical Neurophysiology* suggests that splashing cold water on your face may restore energy even faster than some of the other popular options, says Hewett.

■ **Pump those beats.** Listening to high energy music can improve your mood and increase your energy, says Hewett, and personal trainer Lisa Moore agrees. "Studies show a song with an upbeat tempo can give you that burst of energy you need to finish out those last few reps or last few minutes of cardio. Overall, exercising to music has shown to be a great way to work out longer and harder," says Moore, of [fitnessontheho.ca](http://fitnessontheho.ca).

■ **Sleep tight and eat right.** Studies show you're more likely to skip that exercise session if you're overtired, says Moore, so get seven to eight hours a night. And when it comes to breakfast, there are a multitude of studies that show reduced energy, weight gain and general lethargy are related to skipping your morning meal, she adds. "Include a little protein when you eat first thing, and feel your energy levels rise."

■ **Stay hydrated.** Drink water throughout the day to make sure you're topped up for your workout, and have water handy while you're exercising, stresses Moore. "Dehydration is a surefire way to reduce your ability to make it through your exercise routine."



## DON'T PUSH THROUGH PAIN

No pain, no gain? Think again.

"Unfortunately I've seen far too many people have more pain than gain as a result of this philosophy," says fitness expert Josh Hewett, of [top-form-fitness.com](http://top-form-fitness.com). "Part of the problem with an overly aggressive approach to getting in shape is that once you are injured you will have set yourself back significantly."

Think CrossFit, a controversial group fitness craze hooked on high-intensity workouts. Legions of believers herald its results, and critics decry its methods for inducing injury.

"CrossFit has gained a reputation for delivering more than its fair share of injuries ... Part of the reason for this is the explosive nature of many of the exercises involved. Quite often, these

fast movements are performed for very high repetitions with minimal rest between them," says Hewett.

This can be a recipe for disaster, stresses Hewett. "As one fatigues, exercise form tends to get sloppier, and when moving weights quickly in a fatigued state the risk of injury is much higher. Also, in my opinion many CrossFit athletes adopt a 'don't quit' attitude, which can lead them to push to the point of flirting with injury. This is when speed can kill."

He adds that many of these power movements are very technique-intensive and can take a long time with proper coaching to perfect one's technique. "Unfortunately in a group setting, even with a decent instructor, it can be very difficult to monitor each individual participant."

According to personal trainer Lisa Moore, "it's a tough workout style, but will kick your ass if it's for you." She recommends research and referrals when looking for any trainer/training centre, and any participant should be positive they are physically ready to start the program.

"Pushing through the pain of a hard workout is one thing; pushing through pain caused by an impending injury is entirely another," says Moore, of [fitnessontheho.ca](http://fitnessontheho.ca). "It's definitely an eyes-wide-open kind of fitness experience."

Hewett recommends participating in a well-designed progressive resistance training program using a moderate repetition speed and strict form. "Challenge yourself but take the time to progress properly."